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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
---------- 129351
O 041854Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3518

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 MADRID 7687

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

1. UNWILLING AT THE OUTSET TO ACCEPT A TEMPORARY ASSUMPTION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF CHIEF OF STATE, JUAN CARLOS DID SO BECAUSE OF PRESSING NEED, LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE TENSE SAHARA QUESTION, AND ALSO BECAUSE OF THE CATEGORICAL MEDICAL OPINION THAT FRANCO'S LIFE IS INEXORABLY DRAWING TO A CLOSE. LAST NIGHT'S OPERATION SHOWED FRANCO'S TENACITY BUT AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THE GRAVITY OF HIS CONDITION. MEDICAL OPINION IS ALSO THAT AS LONG AS FRANCO LINGERS, HE WILL BE AN INVALID AND COULD NOT REASSUME THE POWERS OF CHIEF OF STATE.

2. THUS JUAN CARLOS HAS EVERY RIGHT TO EXPECT HE WILL SOON BECOME KING OF SPAIN EITHER BECAUSE FRANCO HAS DIED, HAS SIGNED THE PAPERS FOR A PERMANENT TRANSFER OF POWER OR HAS BEEN DECLARED INCAPACITATED. THIS LAST IS THE POLITICALLY LEAST PALATABLE ALTERNATIVE. EVEN THE PRESENCE OF AN ENFEEBLED FRANCO WHO HAS AGREED TO STEPPING DOWN PERMANENTLY COULD POSE DIFFICULTIES, SINCE THE QTE BUNKER UNQTE WOULD CLAIM TO CITE FRANCO'S PERSONAL VIEWS IN ARGUMENT AGAINST LIBERALIZING MEASURES.

3. NEITHER NOW AS ACTING HEAD OF STATE, UNDER THE ILLNESS PROVISION OF ARTICLE 11 OF THE ORGANIC LAW, NOR LATER AS KING, WILL JUAN CARLOS HAVE FRANCO'S POWERS, MOST NOTABLY THE PREROGATIVE TO RULE BY DECREE WITHOUT
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REFERENCE TO CABINET, COUNCIL OF THE REALM OR "CORTES".

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(NOR WILL HE DIRECTLY HEAD THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, WHICH MAY BE A GODSEND.) NEVERTHELESS, PARTICULARLY AT THE BEGINNING HE WILL BE ABLE TO PLAY A STRONG ROLE, AS HE IS ALREADY DEMONSTRATING WITH REGARD TO THE SAHARA. HOWEVER, UNTIL HE ACTUALLY BECOMES KING, I BELIEVE HE WILL BE RELUCTANT TO MAKE MAJOR DOMESTIC CHANGE. HE MUST CONTINUE TO ACT ON THE SAHARA - WHICH HAS QUICKLY TESTED HIS METTLE. AND BY NOV 26 HE WILL HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION ON WHETHER TO RETAIN THE CONSERVATIVE "CORTES" AND COUNCIL OF THE REALM PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ DE VALCARCEL, WHOSE TERM EXPIRES THAT DATE. OTHER KEY ACTIONS ONCE FRANCO IS GONE, WILL BE HIS FIRST MAJOR PUBLIC STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS, AND HIS DECISIONS ON A NEW GOVT.

4. WHILE THE SHAPE OF THE NEW SPAIN REMAINS TO BE TRACED OUT, JUAN CARLOS HAS GOT OFF TO A VERY GOOD START, PROJECTING A "TAKE CHARGE" IMAGE IN A MOMENT OF EXTERNAL CRISIS. THE COUNTRY REMAINS COMPLETELY TRANQUIL, BUT THERE IS AN AIR OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS. AMONGST THE POST-CIVIL WAR GENERATION, AND ONE MUST HAVE BEEN OVER 50 TO HAVE MANY MEMORIES, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE HOPE AND EAGERNESS TO BE A PART OF A NEW DEMOCRATIC SPAIN WHICH CAN, AT LAST, TAKE ITS PLACE AS A FULL-FLEDGED AND ACCEPTED WESTERN COUNTRY. THEY WANT IMMEDIATE ACTION TO OPEN THE NEW ERA, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO CONSENSUS ABOUT THE MEASURES OR, INDEED, THE TEMPO. SOME WANT INSTANT REVERSAL (A QTE RUPTURE UNQTE); OTHERS ARE LESS IMPATIENT.

5. AMONGST THE OLDER GENERATION, THERE IS ALSO EXPECTATION, BUT A DEEPER CONCERN OVER WHAT WILL COME NEXT. THEY CONTRAST THE CHAOS OF THE CIVIL WAR WITH THE EVENTUALLY PROSPEROUS STABILITY WHICH FRANCO BROUGHT. MANY RECOGNIZE THAT SPAIN MUST EVOLVE POLITICALLY, BUT THEY ARE NERVOUS ABOUT THE EXTENT AND THE TEMPO. AND A GOODLY NUMBER OF THEM ARE PRISONERS OF MEMORIES THAT MOST SPANIARDS WOULD JUST AS SOON FORGET. ON THE RIGHT, THESE WIELD CONSIDERABLE POWER THROUGH THE CIVIL WAR VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS. ON THE LEFT ANCIENT TEACHINGS STIR UP YOUNG MEN WHO DO NOT REALIZE HOW MUCH THEY HAVE TO LOSE.

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6. NEVERTHELESS, I BELIEVE THE DOMINANT MOOD OF THE COUNTRY AT THIS JUNCTURE FAVORS EVOLUTIONARY, CAREFULLY CONCEIVED PROGRESS TOWARD A MORE OPEN, DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. FRANCO'S LEAVING IS AT THE RIGHT TIME (SOME WOULD SAY HE SHOULD HAVE RETIRED EARLIER). BUT HAD HE STAYED, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN INEVITABLY MORE POLARIZATION.

7. THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE NEW SITUATION AT THE

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OUTSET WILL BE JUAN CARLOS WHO, HIMSELF, IS PART OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION AND WHO IS WIDELY ACCEPTED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AS SPAIN'S BEST HOPE FOR AN ORDERLY AND PEACEFUL TRANSITION. FROM MY MANY TALKS WITH HIM, I KNOW HE IS FULLY COMMITTED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT SPAIN MUST BECOME A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY ALONG THE GENERAL LINES OF THE DEMOCRACIES OF WESTERN EUROPE. HE KNOWS THAT SPAIN'S FUTURE, NOT TO SPEAK OF HIMSELF AND THE MONARCHY, LIES IN HIS ABILITY TO SET THIS NEW COURSE AND TO CHOOSE A PRIME MINISTER AND GOVT NOT ONLY WILLING, BUT CAPABLE OF PURSUING IT. THE PRINCE HAS CERTAINLY MATURED OVER THE YEARS, BUT HE HAS HAD LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN THE ART OF STATECRAFT. SURROUNDED BY CONFLICTING ADVICE AND INTERESTS, THE PRINCE WILL FIND HIS QUITE DECENT INTENTIONS SEVERELY TESTED.

8. AS I SEE IT - AND AS MOST SPANISH OBSERVERS SEE IT - HE HAS THE USUAL THREE OPTIONS, EACH SUBJECT TO REFINEMENT AND ADJUSTMENT: (A) KEEP THE PRESENT REGIME IN PLACE WITH SOME TOKEN CHANGES AND PURSUE THE LIMITED LIBERALIZATION POLICIES PERMITTED THE PRESENT GOVT, (B) SEEK AND ACCEPT THE RESIGNATIONS OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE GOVT AND ALL THE HIGHEST STATE AUTHORITIES AND PUT INTO PLACE A NEW

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
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GROUP COMMITTED TO IMMEDIATE, DRASTIC CHANGE (A QTE RUPTURE UNQTE UNDER THE MONARCHY) OF PRESENT INSTITUTIONS OR (C) ANNOUNCE HIS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY LOOKING TOWARD A MORE OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC SPAIN AND THEN BRING IN A BROADENED GOVT INCLUDING REGIME APERTURISTAS AND A SHARE OF NON-REGIME ESTABLISHMENT TYPES TO CARRY OUT THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO MOVE

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SPAIN FIRMLY ON THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY IN A CONTROLLED BUT STEADY FASHION.

9. FOR A LONG TIME SPAIN HAS NOT BEEN A MONARCHIST COUNTRY. THE INITIAL AURA OF GOOD FEELING ACCORDS JUAN CARLOS NO PERMANENT LEGITIMACY. THAT LEGITIMACY CAN BE OBTAINED ONLY THROUGH AN ENFRANCHISING PROCESS THAT CREATES BROAD BASED SUPPORT FOR A NEW KIND OF SPAIN OVER WHICH HE CAN THEN REIGN. POLARIZATION COULD BE FATAL TO THE MONARCHY. FRANQUISMO WITHOUT FRANCO IS A NON-OPTION, GIVEN THE MOOD OF PRINCE AND NATION. BUT THE FIRST OPTION WOULD ALSO BE PERCEIVED AS A QTE BUNKER UNQTE ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO WITH ONLY AN ILLUSION OF CHANGE. IT WOULD SOON LEAD TO CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE QTE BUNKER UNQTE THEORY AS BEST DESIGNED TO KEEP SPAIN IMMUNE FROM THE ENEMY (E.E., COMMUNISTS) AND THOSE MANY ELEMENTS IN SPAIN, INCLUDING LABOR, THE CHURCH, UNIVERSITIES, YOUNGER POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERS, WHO ARE NO LONGER PREPARED TO LIVE WITHIN THE CONFINES OF AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME.

10. THE SECOND OPTION HAS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT AMONGST YOUNGER ELEMENTS BOTH FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT AND PARTICULARLY FROM THOSE WHO BELONG TO DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION

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GROUPS. BUT THIS OPTION COULD ALSO PROVOKE A CONFRONTATION, LED BY SUPPORTERS OF THE BASIC INSTITUTIONS OF THE REGIME AND FALANGISTS WHO REMEMBER THE CIVIL WAR AND WOULD FIND SO DRAMATIC A RUPTURE A QTE BETRAYAL UNQTE OF WHAT FRANCO HAD STOOD FOR. THEY COULD CALL UPON CONSIDERABLE CONSERVATIVE SENTIMENT IN THE COUNTRY AND PLAY UPON THE FEARS OF THOSE WHO MIGHT SEE THE MATERIAL BENEFITS OF MODERN SPAIN ENDANGERED BY A DIZZYING CHANGE. JUAN CARLOS SHARES THE POWERS WITH THE PRESENT INSTITUTIONS AND I DOUBT HE WOULD FIND THE PROPER PEOPLE OR THE NECESSARY SUPPORT, INCLUDING THE ARMY, TO CARRY OUT SUCH RADICAL SURGERY, NOR DO WE SENSE HIM AS WANTING TO MOVE THAT PRECIPITOUSLY.

11. THE THIRD OPTION SEEMS MOSTLY LIKELY. JUAN CARLOS HAS TOLD ME THAT IT IS HIS INTENTION SHORTLY AFTER BECOMING KING TO SET FORTH HIS OWN PHILOSOPHY WITH REGARD TO SETTING SPAIN ON A COURSE TOWARD DEMOCRACY SO THAT SPAIN MAY PLAY ITS ROLE AMONG THE MODERN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES OF THE WORLD. THEN HE WILL HAVE TO MAKE THE KEY DECISIONS ON THE COMPOSITION OF HIS NEW GOVT. JUAN CARLOS HAS CONSIDERED DROPPING ARIAS. BUT THE LACK OF ANY CLEARLY SUPERIOR REPLACEMENT NOW MAY IMPEL HIM TO RETAIN ARIAS AT LEAST FOR A CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME AT THE HEAD OF NEW GOVT INCLUDING MINISTERS WITH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE OPENINGS TO

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THE VARIOUS RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL FORCES IN THE COUNTRY. ARIAS WOULD, UNDER THIS SCENARIO, BE A TRANSITION PRIME MINISTER -- WHICH SOME OF THE OTHERS MIGHT NOT WANT TO BE -- AND HAS CERTAIN CREDENTIALS AS A MOTIVATOR OF THE TRUNCATED FEBRUARY 1974 LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM. WITH OR WITHOUT ARIAS - AND THERE ARE OTHER CANDIDATES - THIS OPTION THREE WILL NOT GAIN THE FULL SUPPORT OF ALL THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION (MUCH LESS THE COMMUNISTS) BUT COULD GAIN GENERAL ACCEPTANCE DEPENDING ON THE GOVT'S PROGRAM.

12. THAT PROGRAM AT A MINIMUM, WOULD HAVE TO LEGALIZE THE PRESENTLY QTE ILLEGAL UNQTE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION. SOME DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION FORCES WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE) LEGALIZED SINCE THEY BELIEVE AN EXCLUSION WOULD GIVE THE PCE THE ADVANGAGE OF MARTYRDOM WHILE ENHANCING THEIR CLANDESTINE ORGANIZATION. I THINK IT MOST UNLIKELY

THAT A NEW GOVT COULD GO THIS FAR, ALTHOUGH I DO NOT RULE IT OUT AT A LATER STAGE. (NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT PCE PARTICIPATION IN GOVT, EXCEPT THE PCE ITSELF.)

13. IF POLITICAL PARTIES, EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS, WERE LEGALIZED, I BELIEVE THAT MOST OF THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION WOULD PLAY WHILE EXPRESSING RESERVE ABOUT THE EXCLUSION. ANOTHER SINE QUA NON WOULD BE A REAL START ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, NOT OF THE "LET'S WRITE A NEW CONSTITUTION" VARIETY, BUT A SELECTIVE APPROACH THAT WOULD END WITH UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND A "CORTES" SET UP THAT REFLECTED POPULAR CHOICE RATHER THAN THE CURRENT BASICALLY APPOINTIVE MAKE UP. OTHER ISSUES INCLUDE THE GRANTING OF AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS (BUT NOT TERRORISTS) AND A TRANSFER OF ANTI-TERRORIST PROCEEDINGS TO THE CIVIL COURTS WITH A MEASURE OF DUE PROCESS AND RIGHTS OF APPEAL.

14. ANOTHER AREA WHERE THERE WILL BE PRESSURE FOR JUAN CARLOS TO MOVE RAPIDLY WILL BE IN THE LABOR FIELD, GIVEN THE WIDESPREAD DESIRE AMONG SPANISH WORKERS FOR MORE REPRESENTATIVE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL TREAD CAUTIOUSLY, SINCE THE "BUNKER" WILL CORRECTLY PERCEIVE LIBERALIZATION HERE AS AN ATTACK ON ONE OF THE STRONGHOLDS OF THE OLD REGIME, THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION.

15. THE TRICK IN ALL OF THIS WILL BE THE NEW KING'S ABILITY TO START MOVING AT THE RIGHT PACE. IF HE PRESSES TOO FAR AND TOO FAST, HE WILL SET UP STRONG REACTIONS ON THE RIGHT. IF HE DOES NOT MOVE FAST ENOUGH OR FAR ENOUGH, HE WILL LOSE THE SUPPORT OF THOSE MANY

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YOUNGER SPANIARDS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE, INCLUDING THOSE
BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE SYSTEM, WHO ARE NOT PRE-
PARED TO WAIT TOO LONG. THE NEW KING WILL HAVE A MAJOR
ASSET IN THE EXISTENCE OF A VAST MIDDLE CLASS WHO WOULD
LIKE THEIR COUNTRY TO MOVE POLITICALLY WITH THE MODERN
DEMOCRATIC WORLD, BUT WHO DO NOT WANT ADVENTURE. THESE
SPANIARDS ARE NOT THINKING AS MUCH IN TERMS OF THE
HORRORS OF THE CIVIL WAR, ALTHOUGH THEY WILL BE REMINDED
OF IT TOO, AS THEY ARE IN TERMS OF ANYTHING WHICH COULD
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DEPRIVE THEM OF THE STANDARD OF LIVING TO WHICH THEY
HAVE BECOME EASILY ACCUSTOMED.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3520

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16. THE ARMY IS BEHIND THE PRINCE, EVEN MORE SO AFTER
THE VERY INTELLIGENT VISIT TO THE SAHARA. OVER THE LONG
HAUL TODAY'S LARGELY APOLITICAL ARMY (KEPT FRAGMENTED BY
FRANCO'S GENIUS AT PREVENTING INDEPENDENT POWER CENTERS
FROM DEVELOPING) COULD PROVE TROUBLESOME IF THINGS DON'T
GO RIGHT. INITIALLY, THIS TROUBLE WOULD COME FROM
AUTHORITARIAN MILITARY LEADERS SHOULD THEY BELIEVE JUAN
CARLOS WAS MOVING TOO FAST. DOWN THE PIKE, AN UPSWING IN
THE POLITICS OF CONFRONTATION, OR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ECONOMIC OR PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS NOT ADEQUATELY HANDLED,
MIGHT RADICALIZE YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS TOWARDS NASSERITE
OR PERUVIAN STYLE NATIONALISM. BUT JUST NOW THE MILITARY
WOULD SEEM TO BE A STABILIZING FORCE.

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17. TERRORISTS ON BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT CLEARLY ARE GOING TO POSE DIFFICULTIES. THERE IS A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTREME LEFT FORCES OF THE FRAP AND ETA (BASQUE SEPARATISTS) AND RIGHTIST BULLY-BOYS WHO HAVE CARRIED ON A MEASURE OF COUNTER TERRORISM IN THE BASQUE PROVINCES AND ENGAGED IN UNPLEASANT FORMS OF INTIMIDATION IN THE REST OF SPAIN. BOTH SEEK THE CONTINUATION OF REPRESSIVE GOVT - EACH FOR THEIR OWN REASONS - AND WE MAY EXPECT SOME ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE GOING.

18. THE KING WILL START OFF WITH A NUMBER OF QTE ONE OF A KIND UNQTE CARDS IN HIS HANDS. THEY CAN NEVER BE RETRIEVED ONCE THEY ARE PLAYED AND THE RIGHT MOMENT TO PLAY THEM WILL RUSH BY, NEVER TO BE REPEATED. HE WILL REQUIRE COURAGE, GOOD ADVICE AND A LOYAL TEAM. HE WILL BE SURROUNDED BY ESSENTIALLY CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS, BUT HE

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HAS ALSO THROWN OUT HIS LINES TO THOSE IN THE CENTER AND LEFT OF CENTER. HE WILL NEED ALL THE SUPPORT HE CAN GET.

19. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE NEW KING DOES NOT PLAY HIS CARDS RIGHT OR FINDS HIMSELF FACED WITH OBSTACLES ON THE RIGHT WHICH HE CANNOT OVERCOME? IN THE SHORT RUN, THE SITUATION WILL BE PRESERVED BY THE ARMY AND THE FORCES OF PUBLIC ORDER. BUT OVER THE LONGER TERM, THE PRESSURES OF THE VARIOUS DISCONTENTED GROUPS, INCLUDING LABOR, A THEN GROWING NUMBER IN THE MILITARY, THE CHURCH, UNIVERSITIES, DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION ELEMENTS, WILL BEGIN TO SURFACE IN MORE ASSERTIVE OR VIOLENT WAYS AND SUCH VIOLENCE WILL FIND NEW ALLIES. FRANCO'S DISAPPEARANCE PAVES THE WAY FOR A HOPEFUL NEW ERA. BUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JUAN CARLOS WOULD OPEN THE WAY FOR A STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS AND EXTREMISTS OF ALL STRIPES COULD BE EXPECTED TO PLAY A STRONG ROLE, CLANDESTINELY OR OTHERWISE.

20. IT IS CLEARLY IN U.S. INTEREST TO URGE JUAN CARLOS TO MOVE GRADUALLY, BUT RESOLUTELY AND NOT TOO SLOWLY, TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION. WE SHOULD GIVE HIM THE SUPPORT HE CLEARLY WANTS FROM US IN THESE EFFORTS, BUT TOO CLOSE AN EMBRACE MIGHT NOT BE HELPFUL FOR HIM, NOR WOULD AN ACTIVIST EFFORT TO PRESCRIBE THIS OR THAT POLITICAL SOLUTION IN A COMPLEX AND UNPREDICTABLE SITUATION BE ADVISABLE. IN ALL OF THIS, WE SHALL ALSO HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE OPINION OF THE EUROPEANS SINCE A CONTINUING NATIONAL INTEREST LIES IN A MUCH CLOSER LINKAGE OF SPAIN TO EUROPE THROUGH NATO AND OTHER TIES. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, I AM IN AGREEMENT WITH THE HELPFUL

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INSTRUCTIONS SENT TO ME IN STATE 259501 AND LOOK FORWARD
TO THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THIS SITUATION IN WASHINGTON
SHORTLY AFTER THE TRANSITION ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MADRID07687
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750383-0028
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751177/aaaacqsx.tel
Line Count: 389
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JUN 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <29 OCT 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS
TAGS: PINT, SP, (JUAN CARLOS, PRINCE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006